

## BRIDGING THE GAP IN ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION FROM MARGIN TO CENTER

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Much of the adult education graduate curricula fail to include both content and practice relative to the intersection of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. This research seeks to conduct a critical examination of the underlying assumptions and perspectives shaping adult education graduate curriculum content (selection) and instructional practice (delivery).

This critique will proceed from an Africentric feminist approach. Africentric Feminism is an ancestrally historically based paradigm that reflects the lived experiences, struggles and shared history of women from the Afrikan Diaspora. An Africentric feminist approach is embedded in a consciousness that espouses the affirmation of all people, female and male alike. It is imperative that there is a shift from the dominant (traditional) approach to organizing content around the lived experiences/worldviews of those marginalized or non mainstream, bringing their experiences and "voice" from the margin to the center of the analysis.

This research consisted of an analysis of a foundational graduate course in adult education, a course in the history and philosophy of adult education that was taught in a traditional manner utilizing a dominant approach, and one that was subsequently taught from an Africentric feminist paradigm. The incorporation of Africentric tools such as historically ethnic appropriate material, the philosophical perspectives of Africentric/Latina(o)/First Nation scholars, the voice of Afrikana womanists, the struggles of Queer Nation provide selfethnic reflectors (Colin, 1994) for various marginalized groups. By doing so, it exemplified the lived experiences and "voice" of "others" resulting in a more inclusive process. Diversity in the course content provides space that enables changes in instructional practice as well: insisting that power relationships are diffused as much as possible, encouraging co-learning, establishing norms for encouraging women to speak out, precluding more assertive students from monopolizing their voice in the classroom. Thus, students are afforded an opportunity to have a different classroom experience because they are directly involved in the discourse and the content is their story. This type of experience leads to the potential for an emancipatory learning experience. It allows those in the margin to be located in the center, and to feel centered. Being centered is very close to feelings of power because it is related to identity, this is when education becomes exciting. Conversely, students of the dominant group who have taken privilege for granted can have the experience of deconstructing that privilege. This type of teaching is one that can become exhilarating for both adult educators and learners.

Colin, S.A.J. III (1994). Adult and continuing graduate programs: Prescription for the future. In E. Hayes and S.A.J. Colin III (Eds.). *Confronting racism and sexism*. New Directions for Continuing Education, no. 43. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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